

be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

CONFIRMATION OF JANET LOUISE YELLEN

Mr. SULLIVAN. Madam President, I am going to be one of the first Senators to congratulate Dr. Yellen, now Secretary Yellen, to be Secretary of the Treasury of the United States.

You saw it was a strong vote, and there is no doubt that she has the credentials, the experience, the qualifications to be Secretary of the Treasury—former Chairman of the Fed. I mean, her resume is off the charts.

I know her nomination is historic for so many women across the country, including my three daughters. I am mentioning this because I certainly intended to vote for now-Secretary Yellen, and I was a “no” vote.

I want to explain my “no” vote because I had a very good conversation with her just the other day. We covered a whole bunch of topics—everything from Alaska Native corporations to the strength of the dollar, to our debt and deficit—big macroeconomic issues that are important to the country, particularly as we are in a recession. It is important to my State.

But we got to the topic of energy. We got to the topic of energy, and, reluctantly, I am saying this now because I was a bit shocked that despite a long, robust discussion, it was very difficult to get her, from my perspective, to commit to being a Secretary of the Treasury, the most important economic player in any Cabinet in any government—in the U.S. Government, besides, of course, the President—to commit to being a strong advocate for a robust, all-of-the-above energy sector for the U.S. economy.

This is not a radical proposition. I would argue that every Secretary of the Treasury since Alexander Hamilton has been a robust supporter of resource development in our energy sector—again, all of it—renewables, oil, gas. And the reason is that it has been such an important driver of economic growth and jobs for pretty much our Nation’s entire existence.

Now that we are in this recession—deep recession—we need good job growth, and we need a strong recovery. To me, having the Secretary of the Treasury be a strong proponent in the debates about policy for the energy sector, I thought, was a no-brainer. As a matter of fact, I think pretty much every Secretary of the Treasury has been that person. Again, in the 2008–2009 recession—the deep, great recession—the No. 1 driver of economic growth and job growth and capital formation for the U.S. economy was the energy sector, and it was supported. Democrats and Republicans, for dec-

ades, have supported a strong energy sector.

But despite a long, respectful debate with now Secretary Yellen, with whom I certainly have a good relationship, I could not get that commitment, which I thought was surprising. As a matter of fact, I thought it was shocking, and it is the reason I reluctantly voted no because, again, she is very qualified.

What is going on here is we are starting to see policies that I believe need a national debate. We are starting to see policies—yes, we all want renewables, clean energy, but we have a really important, strong energy sector.

Prior to the pandemic, we were the world’s superpower of energy again. One of the reasons we won World War II was our energy sector. The men and women who have been producing energy—“all of the above” energy—are great patriotic workers who have been doing it for decades to the benefit of every single American.

We need a debate because what I am starting to see with the new administration, unfortunately—and I have had discussions, and, hopefully, they are not going to go down this path—are Executive actions that are going to target certain sectors of the energy sector, the U.S. economy.

Natural gas. We can be dominant in natural gas for 100 years. We are going to start targeting workers in the natural gas sector?

Oil. I know some people don’t like oil, but it is important.

We can do all of this, but right now, there seems to be hostility toward the sector and the workers and no debate. We should have that debate. It is an important debate. It is really important in my State, but I think it is really important to America.

Every Secretary of the Treasury for the last three, four, five, six, seven decades—since World War II—has always sought the goal of getting America back to energy independence. That is good for jobs. It is good for low-cost manufacturing. It is good to reduce the heating and energy bills of American families. It is good for our national security. It is good for our foreign policy. We are pretty much on the verge of doing this. And now we are going to start to unilaterally disarm?

We have gotten to the point where I can’t find anyone—and I hope I am wrong—in the Biden administration Cabinet who is going to be a proponent of a strong energy sector. Who is it? I was hoping it was going to be the Secretary of the Treasury. Maybe in our long discussion, I misinterpreted where she is going to be on this issue. Pretty much every previous Secretary—Democratic and Republican—in the history of our great Nation has really, really been an advocate for the men and women who work in the sector and for the economic growth it brings and for the help it brings to families and the good jobs it brings. So that is the rationale behind my vote.

Right now, I think we are starting to see, whether with the Keystone Pipe-

line decision or with the men and women in the building trades, who have built this country through hard work, that they are being laid off by the thousands. We had a big scare back home in my State. All weekend, I was working this issue of these Executive orders from the Biden administration, where it looked like it was going to send hundreds of people home, unemployed—oil and gas workers in my State. Why? I hope that is not the case, especially during a recession.

We need a debate on it, and I certainly hope somebody in this administration, in their principals’ meetings, talk about how we get good jobs and a strong working class. I have noticed that the National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, keeps talking about basing our policies on working-class families. You can’t get more blue-collar, strong middle class than these energy sector jobs.

I, certainly, want to have a good, constructive relationship with the Secretary of the Treasury and her team, but given the people I represent and what I am starting to see right now, I could not in good conscience vote yes when, on the basic question of “Are you committed and will you be a strong advocate for a strong energy sector—you name it: renewables, natural gas, wind, solar—all of the above?” I couldn’t get that commitment. I reluctantly voted no on someone who has a background and experience in these other areas that are important for the country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I have hastened to the floor because I was upstairs, waiting for the House managers to bring the article over, and I heard my friend, the distinguished Senator from Alaska, talking about his concern about the fossil fuel part of the energy sector and his dissatisfaction with what the Secretary of the Treasury was able to assure him of in that regard.

I just wanted to note that I missed a moment of the Senator’s remarks when I came walking down here, but as best as I could tell, the Senator never mentioned the term “climate change,” and he never referenced “carbon emissions.” I have to say, if we are going to deal with our energy sector, we have to deal with it in a way that takes into account carbon emissions and climate change. You can’t just whistle past those things and pretend that they are not real and act as if we can continue to go forward in the way we always have—releasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, poisoning our oceans with acidification, warming the planet, and putting coastal communities like mine at grave risk from sea level rise and storm surge. We have to address those things.